

Collective Neurosis & Opium of the Masses

While monotheistic religion points out that religion came down to earth from heaven carrying the message of the Creator, humanistic thinkers realize that religion is something that grew up on earth to satisfy a human need, to solve a human problem. The human problem is this problem of existence, which is mortality itself. This is why even monotheistic religions hope to gain eternal life and eternal happiness in heaven after death.

Out of all the infants of all the animals the human infant is the weakest. While the infant of all other animals will be able to move about and find food in a few minutes or a few days, the human infant needs a few years to be able to do so. When the human child feels insecure, the child runs to the father or mother for security. When these children grow up to adulthood, they begin to realize that the parents are as helpless as they themselves are. So when the adults are in difficulty where can they run? Culture has provided a solution. That solution is what we call religion.

How does religion attempt to solve this problem of insecurity in life? It runs into a dream world where there is an all-powerful father God or a multiplicity of supernatural gods who can use their powers to help. Humanistic thinkers have begun to criticize this cultural solution. Sigmund Freud called it a “collective neurosis,” and Carl Marx called it the “opium of the masses.”



BUDDHISM AS A RELIGION

Part 1 – An Introduction



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Now we are going to discuss Buddhism as a religion and in discussing Buddhism as a religion, we have seven headings to discuss, so every day we'll have one heading I suppose, sometimes one heading we'll have to spend two days, but we'll see how long it will take.



BUDDHISM AS A RELIGION: TOPICS

1. **Introduction:** The difference between magic and religion, and religion as an evolutionary process
2. **Evolution:** Biological and Psychological process
3. **Theology:** Comparative Theology – Theistic and Humanistic definition of God
4. **Cosmology:** Comparative Buddhist and Astronomical Thinking
5. **Eschatology:** Kamma, Rebirth, Samsara, and the Realms of Existence
6. **Soteriology:** Salvation of man in Nibanna
7. **Conclusion:** Buddhism is a religion advanced to its culmination or ultimate climax which is becoming a Buddha

The first heading is introduction, and in that introduction we're going to talk about the difference between magic and religion, and religion as an Evolutionary Process, and the next heading that we are going to talk about is Evolution. Here we are talking about the Biological Evolution, which is the Evolution of man; how the human being came into being. And then after that we go on to talk about how the human being evolves further. Because according to the Biological Evolution, human being is the highest evolved animal, and we are going beyond that, how a human being can evolve to the level of Superman, and not only that, even going beyond the level of Superman to the Sublime One, the Sublime Individual. So that part the Evolution of man is a psychological thing, not just a biological thing that means that it is not the Evolution of the body but the Evolution of the Mind, so that is what this means Evolution.

And here we are also going to talk about Theology. Now when you begin to study a religion like Christianity, there is what is called Theology, which is to study the meaning of god. God there it's very important to understand because most Buddhists think that Buddhists don't believe in god. Now this is very important and because some people say the Buddhists don't believe in god and therefore they are atheistic. Those who believe in god are called theist; it is coming from Latin word, theist. And those who don't believe in god are called atheist. So some think that Buddhism is a atheistic, but what I'm going to show you is that that is not true; Buddhists do believe in gods of different kinds that we'll be talking about. And there is also the theistic and humanistic ways of defining god.

And then we come to cosmology; cosmos is the Universe. Today the astronomers talk about the universe, of course, there is another subject called astrology; astrology is simply trying to foretell the future or talk about the past using the various planets and the solar system and all that. But the scientific study of the Universe is astronomy not astrology; it is astronomy, so we'll be talking about that.

And then we have another subject call eschatology; now this is a word that Christians use, eschatology; now eschatology means study of what is coming after death, what happens after death. And here we are talking about the concept of “*Karma*”, rebirth, “*saṃsāra*”, and the different Realms of Existence that is what we talk about when we talk about eschatology.

Then another word is soteriology; soteriology is also Christian word, and soteriology is talking about salvation of man. So we also talk about the salvation of man and that is to talk about “*Nirvāṇa*”, what we call “*Nirvāṇa*”.

And then of course we also have a subject call conclusion, and in conclusion we are talking about Buddhism has a religion, and it is the most advanced religion in the world as we begin to talk about it as a religion. But we are talking about Buddhism not as a separate religion; we see the unity of all religions. And then we begin to talk about Buddhism as the highest point in the Evolution of religion.

Religion is also a thing that is evolving, and Buddhism is at the highest point in the Evolution of religion. And this is why Buddhism is never an ancient thing; it is always modern. Buddhism cannot be treated as something primitive or ancient; although, the Buddha lived more than 2500 years ago or more 25 centuries ago. But still it is modern because it is in agreement with all the modern thoughts, modern philosophies, and modern thinking of all kinds.

So this is why we are trying to show with these various pictures and talking about modern science to show that the scientists, modern scientists when they discover new things, these new things have been already spoken of by the Buddha. So the teaching of the Buddha is always new; there's nothing old about the teachings of the Buddha.

So then of course we talk about what is religion. So that is what we are going to talk about today, what is religion? That is before we even talk about the introduction, we are talking about the beginning that comes even before the introduction. We are trying to define the word religion, what is religion? So when we talk about what is religion, it is very important to understand that there are two kinds of religions in the world today.



WHAT IS RELIGION

- Two types of religion: Theistic & Humanistic
- Theistic religions:
 - Judaism, Christianity, Islam, & Hinduism
- Buddhism is a Humanistic religion
- English dictionaries define religion theistically
- Buddhism defines religion humanistically

So when I talk about two kinds of religion, you can think of, normally people begin to think of polytheism and monotheism. But we are not talking about just polytheism and monotheism we are talking about theistic religion and humanistic religion. There are two kinds of religions in the world theistic and humanistic. It is theistic religions that can be divided into two as monotheism and polytheism. All the religions that are found today in the West, they are all based on the Bible. And these religions are supposed to be monotheistic.



Theistic Definition of Religion

- Two types of Theistic religions:
 - Polytheistic: the belief in and prayer to many gods
 - Monotheistic: the belief in, prayer to, and obedience to one supreme Creator of the world
- Most Western and middle Eastern religions are Theistic



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Monotheistic means they believe in one god, the creator who is understood to be the creator of the world. Polytheistic religions were there even before this monotheism came, and these polytheistic religions are religions that worship many gods; there is a god for love or romance, and gods for education learning, then god for sicknesses medicines, and like that for different purposes they have different gods purposes, they have different gods, that is Polytheistic religion. But they are all coming under one name as theistic religion.



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But when we talk about humanistic religion, we are talking about Buddhism only. Buddhism is the purely humanistic religion; that is important to understand. There have been other religions in India like Hinduism, Jainism, and all that. But for the Hindu, there is also polytheism and there is also monotheism in Hinduism, and the Hindus also believe in a creator god, and that creator is called Brahma. And but there is a difference between the Western religions and Hinduism. Although they talk about the creator still that creator God with the capital “G” is explained in a different way. Now before we get into detail study of that we get into the definition of the word religion. Now there are definitions given by the Oxford Dictionary and also the Webster's Dictionary. The Webster's Dictionary is mainly an American Dictionary and Oxford Dictionary is British Dictionary.



DEFINITION OF "RELIGION"

OXFORD DICTIONARY:

- the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or gods*

MERRIAM-WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY:

- the service and worship of God or the supernatural*

So the Oxford Dictionary defines religion as, “*the belief in and worship of a superhuman controlling power, especially a personal God or many gods.*” the creator god or the many gods. Another definition is “*the service and worship of God or the supernatural.*” Merriam-Webster's Dictionary; the Oxford Dictionary and the Webster's Dictionary, the definition is very similar because they're both based on the Western type of religion. Now these dictionaries also define the words theism and humanism.



DEFINITION OF "THEISM"

OXFORD DICTIONARY:

- ❑ *belief in the existence of a god or gods, specifically of a creator who intervenes in the universe*

MERRIAM-WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY:

- ❑ *belief in the existence of a god or gods; specifically: belief in the existence of one God viewed as the creative source of the human race and the world who transcends yet is immanent in the world*

And theism is “*belief in the existence of gods or gods specifically of a creator who intervenes in the universe,*” and the Webster's Dictionary defines theism as, “*belief in the existence of god and gods; specifically: belief in the existence of one God viewed as the creative source of the human race and the world who transcends yet is imminent in the world*” Now these two words transcendence and immanence; transcendence means it is not associated with the world, so that this god is not associated with the world, different from the world. Immanence means this god is somehow in the world. So these are not real. It is illogical to say that, but they believe that we can talk about god in both ways as transcendent and also immanent; that means god is outside the world and god is inside the world at the same time.



DEFINITION OF "HUMANISM"

OXFORD DICTIONARY:

- *a rationalist outlook or system of thought attaching prime importance to human rather than divine or supernatural matters*

MERRIAM-WEBSTER'S DICTIONARY:

- *a doctrine, attitude, or way of life centered on human interests or values; especially : a philosophy that usually rejects supernaturalism and stresses an individual's dignity and worth and capacity for self-realization through reason*

Then these dictionaries also define humanism, “*a rationalist outlook or system of thought attaching prime importance to the human rather than divine or supernatural matters,*” that's how the Oxford Dictionary defines it. When the Webster's Dictionary says, “*a doctrine, attitude, or way of life centered on human interest or values; especially: a philosophy that usually rejects supernaturalism and stresses an individual's dignity and worth and the capacity of self-realization through reason,*” that is the Merriam Webster's Dictionary.

What this means is that humanism is talking about the importance of the human being and what the human being can do, and what are the human being's problems, and how can the problem be solved; that is humanistic religion. But theistic religions are talking about god, not about the human being; that god had the desire to create the world. He created the world and he has a problem because the creatures, who have been created by the god, have become disobedient to god; that is his problem. And now he's very angry, and he wants to correct the situation by threatening the human beings with hell that they will be thrown to hell if they don't obey the creator.

Now that kind of, so religion is simply to become obedient to god and follow god's laws, so that is what religion is for the theists. But the religion for the humanist means the human being has a problem, and that problem is that every human being has to die; this is the biggest problem. If you don't die after growing old, you'll die; you can die even when you're young, you can die even immediately after birth, or may be even before birth while in the mother's womb. So death can come at any moment, and this is a problem for the human being. Because no one wants to die, they celebrate birthdays, but they mourn death. They like to be born but no one wants to die, unless those who want to commit suicide, but even that is done because that person has problems in life and cannot solve the problem other than to die.

You see, this is the human being's problem, and so the human being tries to overcome or solve this problem through the practice of religion. But when you begin to examine both ways of thinking you'll see that both theists and as well as humanists are trying to solve the same problem because the theists they're thinking of a thing call heaven that you can go to. If you become obedient to god, you can go to heaven. And if you ask, "What is heaven?" They say heaven is a place where there is eternal life and eternal happiness. Why do they want eternal life and eternal happiness? Because they have a problem that everything in the world is impermanent, every happiness is impermanent, and every life is impermanent and, therefore, there is death and suffering. So ultimately the humanist is also thinking of that same problem: death and impermanence.

So you see ultimately it is the same problem that everyone is trying to solve. So it's very important to understand this. Now we said that there are two types of theistic religions: polytheism and monotheism. And so when we talk about the humanistic definition of religion, the theistic definition of religion, I told you, it is being obedient to God because he is trying to satisfy god's problem or solve god's problem.



Humanistic Definition of Religion

- Religion is the human effort to solve the human problem of existence, through the conscious evolution of the human consciousness;
- The human consciousness evolves to the point when the human being transcends all human weaknesses and earthly limitations, and enters a superhuman state (*uttari-manussa*) and even going beyond this to the ultimate level called Sublime level (*ariya bhumi*), when the process of evolution reaches its final climax.



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Now for the humanists religion is an effort to solve the human problem, and the human problem is solved through the practice of religion through the process of Evolution of the human being; the human being can solve the problem only through the process of Evolution. And there were some Western philosophers who began to draw attention to this problem. They're called the Existential Philosophers, and they began to realize although they have drawn attention to the problem, they don't know how to solve the problem.

So one man who was a Christian; he was criticizing Christianity, and he said that it is irrational. But still when he began to think about the solution to the problem of life and death, what happened was that he couldn't find a solution. And he said the human intelligence is not able to solve this problem because you cannot stop that, so the only thing is to take the leap of faith. Now leap of faith means, because he criticized Christianity and said that it is irrational, now the only way to solve the problem is to drop the idea that it is irrational and take a blind faith and ask god to solve the problem. So only god can solve the problem that is what he thought.

There are of course some other Existential Philosophers, who didn't want to accept the idea of god as the creator of the world. And they said the only other solution is for the human being to grow up and evolve, become more and more mature in their thinking, the human being will someday be able to solve the problem, but they never found the real solution to the problem.

But it was the Buddha, long before the westerners came to know about this problem or even to try to solve it, long before that about 2,000 years before the Westerner began to think about it, the Buddha solved the problem and brought the solution to others and taught others how to solve. Because this problem cannot be solved by one individual, the problem has to be solved by each individual for himself or herself; that's the problem. So one individual cannot solve other people's problems on a mass scale, so it cannot be done on the mass scale, it has to be done individually by each person. Now we talk about the disadvantages of the theistic definition of religion and the advantages of the humanistic definition of religion.



Disadvantage Of The Theistic Definition

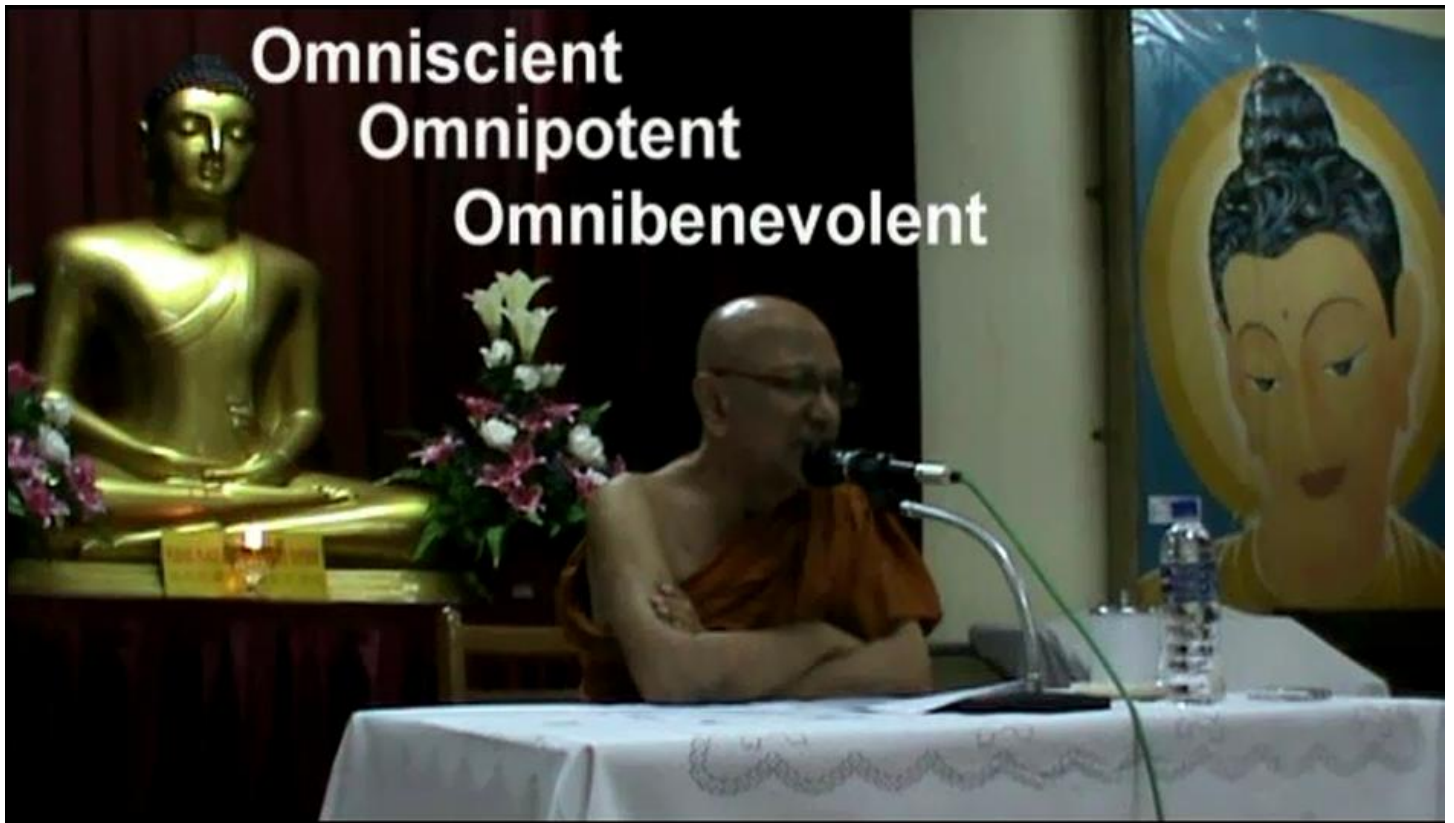
- The definition given in English dictionaries appears blasphemous, seen from a modern perspective;
- This is because blind belief in religious dogmas, rites, and rituals have been discarded by the intellectuals since the age of enlightenment in the West;
- This means that even the respectable moral spiritual values associated with religion would be discarded by the modern generation like throwing the baby with the bath water;
- Responsible citizens are greatly concerned about this fact.

The theistic definition appears to be blasphemous; I use this word blasphemous, which is the word coming from Christianity. Blasphemous means it is an insult it is an insult to religion; the definition of religion is an insult to religion, I said, why? Because if religion is defined as the belief and worship of supernatural beings and gods and devils, then that is seemed to be something primitive by the modern people, and therefore that religion is thrown away, so the modern people will throw away religion. And by throwing away religion, there are some good things that religion also brings to human beings. And that good thing is mainly pointing out what is good and bad, the distinction between good and bad, the values of Life, not the material values but the spiritual values or religious values, and that when you throw away religion, you are throwing away those values also.

And when you throw away the values, it is like throwing the baby with the bathwater. You know what that means is, if you have been bathing the child, after bathing the child in a tub of water, you throw the water out by throwing the water, but when you throw the water the baby's also thrown out. So it is a thing like that; the values are also thrown out when you throw out religion, so people are concerned about this, specially the theistic religions. The wise men are worried about this. And so some people try to solve that problem by trying to attack modern science because it is modern science that threw away religion. They're trying to attack modern science, but they cannot attack modern science; they're trying to do the impossible.

So there was a time when I was invited to participate in a Buddhist Christian Dialogue, and I had to make a speech there presentation. So I ended up by saying that the only way to solve this problem is not to try to attack science or even to defend the dogmas or the primitive dogmas of religion. Instead of doing that, we should try to start thinking in a humanistic way, and the only religion that is really thinking in the humanistic way is Buddhism. But that doesn't mean that we should give up other religions and become Buddhists. Instead of doing that, you can have your own religion, but try to look at it from a humanistic point of view instead of a theistic point of view. And it is only by doing that that we can solve this problem.

So somehow the point here is that such a problem has been created by defining religion as the belief in and worship of a god, so because of this, the humanistic definition is a better definition of religion, where for the humanist, the humanistic definition of religion is that religion is a human concept.



And god is also a human concept, and god is seen as one who is perfect in knowledge, perfect in powers, and perfect in goodness: omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent; those are the words they use.

If god is perfect in all these things, modern philosophers say, “How can this perfect being create an imperfect world?” So they have no proper answer for that; they're trying to blame the human being. They cannot blame the human being because if there is something wrong with the Ford car, who is to be blamed? Not the car. You can just blame the car and break the car or do something like that. You have to blame the maker of the car; that is either you blame Henry Ford or maybe the modern people who are making the Ford car. So whoever it is, the blame should go to the maker and, therefore, ultimately the blame should go not to the human being but to god himself. And the god cannot be blamed because he's perfect; how can a perfect person make an imperfect world; that was the problem.

So instead of trying to maintain that; that perfect person was the creator of the world, the humanistic definition says that this perfect person is not the creator of the world. And that perfect person is only a human concept, and that concept is an idea; ideas to be realized by the human being. And that idea is realized through the practice of religion, and when you have realized the idea you have united with god. All religions talk about union with god. So the only way to unite with god is to realize that perfection, and that is what Buddhism is talking about, a person who realized that perfection is the Buddha. So a human being, who becomes a Buddha means, the human being has realized the idea of perfection that is good. Buddha has become god.



IS BUDDHISM ATHEISTIC ? (2/2)

- Buddhists believe that the human being can reach that ultimate state of perfection; [Theistic thinking accepts that it is possible to unite with God]
- When a person realizes this ideal of perfection, he is called God-become ("***Brahma bhuto***").
[In Western theistic thinking the union with God is only being in the presence of God in heaven. In Eastern theistic thinking man is already God but union is only to realize, "I am God"]



That is why the Buddha used that word "*Brahma Bhuto*". "*Brahma*" is the word for "God", and "*Bhuto*" means "become". God become, "*Brahma Bhuto*". That word was used by the Buddha, not only to refer to himself, it was used even to refer to the "*Arahants*", the Disciples of the Buddha, who reached perfection; they are also "*Brahma Bhuto*"; that means they have become God. So this means that the Buddha didn't throw away this concept of God; he only redefined the concept of God. He explained God in a different way, so it is incorrect to say that Buddhism is Atheistic.



IS BUDDHISM ATHEISTIC ? (1/2)



- Buddhism is neither theistic nor atheistic, but humanistic;
 - It reveals a humanistic concept of god;
 - Therefore it can be called **Anthropotheism**;
 - God is seen as a human concept – the ultimate in human evolution;
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- It is the concept of perfection; [This is quite in agreement with theistic thinking that considers God to be Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Omnibenevolent]
 - Religion is seen as the human effort to realize this ideal of perfection, to solve the problem of existence; [This is in agreement with theistic thinking that speaks of union with God]

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So instead of saying that, Buddhism could be called “Anthropotheism”. “Anthropo” means human; “theism” means that the human being becomes God, and that is not the creator of the world, but in fact that is the destroyer of the world.

You know in Hinduism there are three kinds of Gods there: Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Brahma is supposed to be the creator of the world, and Vishnu is the preserver of the world; he preserves the world. So the people can worship and pray to Vishnu whenever they have problems. And Shiva is the destroyer of the world; that is very important to understand. You know if you have seen these statues of Shiva; there are two statues, one is Shiva meditation, the other Shiva in a dance. The Shiva is holding the hands like this, and with the leg, one leg up; you may have seen that, and around there is some kind of a circle, which is a circle of flaming circle; that means flames going in the form of a circle around Shiva, and his leg is resting on an animal.

Now that hole picture symbolizes what Shiva is. Shiva is able to be dancing like that and Shiva is also able to be meditating. This is really what the Buddha achieved, and he's supposed to be the destroyer of the world. What does that mean? The world is suffering and that is the meaning of that chain that is flame; the flame around Shiva when Shiva is dancing. Now to understand this properly; if you have been practicing meditation, say you are regularly practicing meditation. So when you are practicing meditation, you're sitting in some place, and then you are very calm and tranquil in mind, relax in body, and you are happy and enjoying the peace of tranquility and purity of mind. That is Hindu meditation.

Now after meditating for some time, you get up and begin to walk around, do your normal duties in life, and then again following day again, you come and sit and you get into meditation. That meditation part for you becomes something like taking a vacation; otherwise; you have a lot of duties to perform. And you're performing these duties, and you are taking a vacation from time to time, resting your mind, and you're calming your mind. But if you keep on practicing, a time comes that, of course, some of you may have not experienced that, some of you may have experienced that, and that is you begin to feel, well meditation is my normal home, and doing my other duties is going out.

So the home is the meditation part and going out and doing your other work is; now even the Buddha has this kind of way of seeing it, or even the “*Arahants*”. What does that mean? Now the Buddha also gets, everyday gets into a very calm, tranquil state of the mind, but then after that, he has to go around, collecting food, “*piṇḍapāta*”, and he has to go and talk to the disciples and teach them the “*dhamma*”. And so he also has certain duties to perform, but again when he comes, and when he is alone, he gets into meditation, and he's quiet and resting.

Now that is the two statues of Shiva; Shiva in meditation, and Shiva in the dance, so Shiva in meditation and Shiva in the dance. Now I said Shiva is a destroyer of the world, now what does that mean? The world that we are talking about is all produced by our perception. So when we are going on “*piṇḍapāta*”, or when we are talking to people, we are in the world, along with all the other people. So this is what I call that Paradigm Shift; you see one paradigm is being in the world, and the other paradigm is to come out of the world, and you are in that tranquil state, where there is no world for you during that period. You're out of the world; this is why that “*Samādhi*” I call Ecstasy.

What is Ecstasy? “Ec” means “out”; “stasy” means standing, standing out that is standing out of the world. So when you are in meditation, you are standing out of the world. When you get into the meditation, you are in the world. So you are in the world and out of the world; in and out so until you die. Even the Buddha and “*Arahants*”, they are sometimes in the world, sometimes out of the world. But you have completely given up the world; although, you are in the world sometimes.

But you are in the world means you're behaving like an actor; you know what an actor is doing. Say the actor is acting out a story like say Romeo and Juliet. Now one man is acting like Romeo the other person is acting like Juliet; they are in love. So in the acting, they behave as if they are in love, but they're not in love in reality, but they're acting like they're in love.

So in a similar way when the Buddha gets into the world; he's acting like a person who is living in the world, but he's being in the world but not of the world. Being in the world but not of the world, as like the actor; actor in that story acting like the real person but is not in that real world that he is acting. You see, this is what is expressed in that Shiva story: Shiva in meditation, Shiva dance. So in the same way, we can be living in both ways. So this is something very important to understand; maybe I went out of point, huh? But it is an important thing to understand.

And we come to the anthropological perspective. Now there is a subject today, it's a scientific study of anthropology. Anthropology means “anthropos” means the human being; that is the Latin word, “anthropos” means the human being, and anthropology means the study of the human being, anthropology. So we don't say anthropology, we say anthropology that is the proper pronunciation of that. Anthropology like psychology is pronounced as psychology, in the same way anthropology is pronounced as anthropology that is the British way of pronouncing. So the important thing is that these anthropologists look at religion in a different way which is very humanistic.



ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

- Religion has not come down from heaven to fulfill the need of a “Creator”;
- It had arisen on earth to satisfy a human need;
- Since the dawn of humanity, Man has faced the dilemma of the insecurities of life which is a “problem” – birth, aging, sickness, death;
- Primitive man when faced with this insecurity, in addition to his ignorance about natural phenomena, fuelled by his primitive instinctive superstitions and fear of the unknown, had no refuge to turn to, other than imaginary gods, spirits, or demons that they guessed may be governing the world;

So that is why religion has not come down from heaven to fill the need of a creator; it has arisen on Earth to satisfy a human need. So that means we are talking about religion not from a theistic point of view but from a humanistic point of view. Science is humanistic not theistic. Since the dawn of humanity man has faced the dilemma of the insecurities of life which is a problem: birth, aging, sickness, and death. So although we are struggling to exist, the world around us is preventing us from existing. This is the problem.

You see if you look at the, there's a channel on TV that shows animals all the time, and you see these tigers and lions chasing after cattle or some other animals, and they're all the time, because for the tiger, the animals are the food, but what does the animal think? Now these days we see on TV these poachers killing the lions, tigers, and elephants, so maybe for the poachers there is just the hunting game, but for the lions, tigers, and elephants, they're suffering. They don't like to die. You don't like anyone chasing, cornering, and shooting at you. You see so that is life; one animal is living on the other animal.

Even those who are called vegetarians are living on the plants, you know. Plants don't want to die, but we are living on plants. So that is how the world has been, if the god created the world is that the way god created the world? One animal eating other animals, or even those are vegetarian eating the plants, plants are also living you see. In other words, we cannot escape that, either we should continue to live or we, and that means we are destroying other plants and animals, or we'll have to just starve and die. So this is a big problem. And these animals are not doing these things consciously; it is unconscious, without their knowledge that is their food.

I have seen these the geckos, you know, what a gecko is, huh? Sometimes they run on the wall, and suddenly they catch a fly or something that is on the wall and they eat, so that is how they live. Without catching the flies and eating, there's no other way they can live. So if they try to become vegetarians or even vegetarians are doing the same thing, so we cannot avoid this. So this is why we have to mainly change our thinking. And so it is by understanding this problem of life that we can at least change our thinking. And when we are eating at least we try to eat vegetables or may be conscious instead of eating conscious beings. Vegetables are unconscious, and even animals the lower kind of animal is unconscious. Consciousness is mainly properly established only in the human being.

So this is why killing a human being is a greater offense than killing an unconscious animal. It depends on, but still if we cannot avoid these things; this is why the Buddha didn't lay down a rule even for the monks to refrain from meat eating. Of course, they have to refrain from killing. And killing and eating flesh are two different things.

If when they go on “*piṇḍapāta*”, if someone offers some meat that is just accepted as just some meat that is being cooked and not thinking that this is I'm killing an animal. So everything is really depending on the thought, the motive; what makes you eat that flesh. As you eat the flesh if you think, “Oh it is very good that they kill this animal and is good for me to eat,” and if you think like that, then you are thinking some bad thoughts. But if you think well there is this food these people kill the animals and they have offered me, but I just take the food that's all.

So these are, there is no other way of escape because if we begin to think of how many animals are destroyed by the food we eat, even vegetables are grown. With the destroying other animals as you grow the vegetable, you can't grow vegetables without destroying animals and there are so many animals.

And what about all the bacteria and all these things inside your stomach also, inside your body, even to take medicine means, if you take antibiotics, again you're destroying these various kinds of life. So the only way is to change our thinking, that's the main thing, **but at the same time not to be consciously going and destroying life**. This is the main problem here; we are living at the expense of others; that is how people live; otherwise, we'll have to just starve and die. So while living with difficulty, we should try to practice the “*dhamma*”, okay. So the primitive people of course face the insecurity of life.



ORIGIN OF THEISTIC RELIGION

- Religion becomes the solution to the problem of insecurities of life;
- Seeking help from gods or spirits became the earliest form of religion that appeared on earth;
- Primitive man's primal fear of the unknown, together with feeling of insecurity, fuelled the primitive man's need for salvation in gods and spirits – giving rise to theistic religion as a convenient escape from the real problem of insecurities;
- Therefore, theistic religion is an escape from reality into fantasy;
- Hence, the origin and nature of theistic religion has been revealed;

Now we'll be talking more about the origin of religion and all that later.



MAN'S UNION WITH GOD

- The reality for theistic religion is that Man is the imperfect creation of the perfect God, and therefore the purpose of religion is to unite Man with God by Man imitating God;



- The reality for humanistic religion is that the perfect "god" is the conception of the imperfect Man, as an ideal to be realized through the practice of religion;

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BUDDHISM AS A RELIGION (November 2011)

So religion is really as we said, it's an effort to unite with god in some way and god being simply the concept of perfection. So according to the theistic religion, they think religion is the obedience to god. So god comes down to the Earth and tries to get the people to obey god. But the humanistic way of thinking is just the opposite of that, where the human being is trying to unite with god, and god being the concept of perfection, not another person there. It is simply the concept of perfection. So we go in to the anthropological challenge.



ANTHROPOLOGICAL CHALLENGE

- Even in today's world, in spite of all the greatest scientific discoveries and modern technologies, the "problem" of insecurities of life could not be resolved;
- Advancement in modern technologies has brought about an explosion of countless forms of sensual gratification methods and life extension medication, which has made the "problem" even worse;
- Modern man experiences the cognitive dissonance of recognizing the inevitability and unpredictability of death while at the same time desiring to live forever;
- Modern man turns to religion as the solution to the problem of insecurities of life, culminating in the aspiration for eternal life;

So the anthropology is really challenging the theistic religions in a way because anthropology is humanistic. So this humanistic thinking is challenging the theistic religion. Now this is why I spoke about that period in the west call The Age of Enlightenment, somewhere in the 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, that age was the age when science evolved. Science began to come up, and then during that period, even before that, the religions were trying to attack science. They even killed the scientists, but gradually the scientists somehow won.

And during that Age of Enlightenment, there were revolutions, and people even killed, they destroy the churches, kill the priests, and some even killed the kings and queens because they were trying to defend religion. So things like that happen, but somehow still there are people who are very much into this theistic way of thinking even in United States. And that's why they wanted to get the schools not to teach science, or sometimes at least to stop teaching Evolution, or when that fails, that they also tried to say, while teaching evolution, you should also teach creation.

But creation is not acceptable to science, so they refuse to do that. So there is still going on some people trying to persuade the president to stop science teaching, so anyway cannot be done really. So somehow gradually the new generation will gradually begin to turn towards science more. So anyway you see the kind of challenge that we have.



THE CASE FOR HUMANISTIC RELIGION

- With expansion in modern man's cognitive capacities and intellect, the modern man begins to seek a more rational and humanistic form of religion to address challenges in the modern world;
- Man's search for meaning in this modern world has led the more educated and rational-minded to turn to contemplative practices rather than to theistic religions;
- This explains the growth in popularity of **Buddhism** as a religion among more educated and rational-minded men and women of today;
- This also explains the reason for the publication of this book on Buddhism as a religion;
- This comes out as a modern perspective on an ancient religion – the ever modern and ever relevant Buddhism.

So now we get onto this, is Buddhism, that also we just discussed, is Buddhism theistic or atheistic? That Buddhism is neither theistic nor atheistic, and Buddhism is humanistic.



THE ANTHROPOMORPHIC GOD

- This "God-become" is the **Anthropomorphic God** of the Buddhists.
- This **Anthropomorphic God** of the Buddhists is the **BUDDHA**.
- The Buddha is "*Loka nata*" (saviour of the world)
- The Buddha is "*Loka vidu*" (world knower)
- The Buddha is "*Maha karuniko*" (the great compassionate one)



And so the god, the god of the Buddhist is what is called an Anthropomorphic God. Anthropomorphic means the body is the body of a human being, but the mind is the mind of God that is what the Buddha is.

This is why during the time of the Buddha, there was a person, a Brahmin, who observed; he was following the Buddha while he was walking. The Buddha was walking on the road, and this Brahmin was walking behind, and he noticed the footprints of the Buddha. And there was something different in the footprints of the Buddha. The Buddha's footprints were not like the footprints of a normal human being, there was a difference. And he thought this can't be a human being; these footprints don't look like human footprints. So when he began to think like that, the Buddha was able to read his mind, and he saw that he was thinking like this. So what the Buddha did was he walked out of the road and sat under a tree, so that this man he knew that this man will come and talk to him. So the man came, sat before the Buddha and said,

Brahmin: *“Are you Deva?” “Deva” means some Heavenly being you see. “Are you some Heavenly being?”*

Buddha: He said, *“No! I'm not the Deva?”*

Brahmin: *“Then are you some kind of Devil or something like that?”*

Buddha: He said, *“No! I'm not a devil.”*

Brahmin: *“Then are you some kind of Spirit?”*

Buddha: He said, *“No! I'm not a Spirit?”*

Brahmin: *“Then are you a Human Being?”*

Buddha: He said, *“No! I am not a Human Being.”*

This is very important to understand that he didn't call himself a Human Being. Now some people who write books on Buddhism, they say the Buddha was a human being, but here you read that Sutra you see, the Buddha doesn't say that he is a Human Being.

Brahmin: So he asks, *“You have been saying no to all my questions. who are you?”*

Buddha: He said, *“There are three conditions when present a person can be called a Deva or Yucca or Devil or even a Spirit or even a Human Being. Those three conditions are absent in me. Those three conditions are Lobha, Dosa, and Moha. Lobha is the lust for sensual pleasures, and Dosa is the hatred of pain, and Moha is the thought I am or I exist. Those thoughts are absent in me and, therefore, I cannot be called a God or a Devil or a Spirit or even a Human Being. There's only one word that you can use. I'm an Awakened One; Awaken from the Dream of Existence.”*



AWAKEN FROM SAMSĀRA

Just as the lotus born in the water,
grown up in the water,
rises above the water,
and remains unsoiled by the water;



“It is like a Lotus, though born in the water, grown up in the water, rises above the water, and remains unsoiled by the water.”



AWAKEN FROM SAMSĀRA



Just as the lotus born in the water,
grown up in the water,
rises above the water,
and remains unsoiled by the water;
So is the Buddha,
though born in the world,
grown up in the world,
rises above the world,
and remains unsoiled by the world.

So in the same way I was born in the world, I grew up in the world, and I rose above the world, and I remained unsoiled by the world.”

So this is very important statement that The Buddha made.

HONOUR TO HIM, THE FULLY AWAKENED ONE!



And this is something that we should understand. So this is why if we want to use the modern word, the modern word that is used by all religions is the word God with a capital “G”. God with the simple “g” is different from God with a capital “G”, and so we can use the word God with a capital “G” to refer to the Buddha.



THE ANTHROPOMORPHIC GOD

- This "God-become" is the **Anthropomorphic God** of the Buddhists.
- This **Anthropomorphic God** of the Buddhists is the **BUDDHA**.
- The Buddha is "*Loka nata*" (saviour of the world)
- The Buddha is "*Loka vidu*" (world knower)
- The Buddha is "*Maha karuniko*" (the great compassionate one)



But this is what is called an Anthropomorphic God. "Anthropos" means human, "morphic" means the body; that is a God with the human body. God with the human body, the mind is the mind of God, that is why the freedom from lust, hate, and the delusion. So that is the Anthropomorphic God, and here we have the Buddha being called "*Loka nata*", "*Nata*" means the savior; savior of the world. And "*Loka vidu*", "*Loka vidu*" means one who has penetrated or understood the world. "*Maha karuniko*" means the all compassionate one; one who has the great compassion for all beings. And that compassion is not an emotion; it's a freedom from all emotions that makes one compassionate. So I think we end here.